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Dear Bob:

Your letter concerning the intelligence estimates on Soviet ground forces raises some very interesting points about their reliability, consistency and ranges of uncertainty. I agree that we need a thorough study to evaluate all available information concerning the aspects of Soviet ground forces specified in your letter.

I understand that you sent a memorandum to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff requesting such the same type of study; this was forwarded to DIA for implementation. A proposal to merge these two studies has been discussed with General Carroll, but he is reluctant to do so because of your request to him and other DIA people.

I propose to implement your request to me as follows:

1. A task force of CIA and DIA personnel will be established under CIA direction. The participation of one or two qualified people from your staff as observers would aid us in interpreting your requirements for information and in obtaining US cost data for comparative purposes. They could also help you in evaluating the results of the study.

2. This task force will review all pertinent evidence and prepare a thorough and objective study on manpower, equipment, and the qualitative aspects of Soviet ground forces. I plan to ask the Board of National Estimates to review this study, and of course General Carroll and I will review it.

3. Wherever possible, the ranges of uncertainty will be treated explicitly according to the definitiveness and the reliability of the evidence. [REDACTED]

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b. A preliminary report will be forwarded to you in August, and at this point we will decide on the type of long run program that will best serve to improve our estimates in this field.

Assuming that the arrangements outlined above meet with your approval I will initiate the study. Please nominate one or two members of your staff as observers for this project.

I would like to comment on some of the substantive statements in your letter. In evaluating Soviet military forces there is the danger of inferring that the Soviets have the same doctrine on organization and employment of forces as the US. Even in 1962, the combat tasks envisioned by the US and the USSR for their ground divisions resulted in different organizational and deployment postures; recent changes appear to have increased these differences. For example, Soviet divisional strengths are far below those of either the US mechanized or R/GAD divisions. It is now estimated that there are about half as many men in a typical combat ready Soviet tank division as there are in a typical US armored division. Other significant differences exist in procurement policy, logistic support, and mobilization concepts.

In reply to your request for information on how the Soviets are allocating their military expenditures, I have attached to this letter a recent CIA study prepared in support of NIE 11-4-63 which is currently in process. This study includes estimates of expenditures by mission and category in terms which are as comparable to those of the US as Soviet organization and data limitations permit. There is also an extensive section on the similarities and differences in the scope of US accounts and those used in the study. The study covers the period 1958 through 1967; however, the estimates for the future have a very wide range of uncertainty. The Agency has made similar studies annually for more than five years, and although the full details of such studies have not been included in National Intelligence Estimates, they have been used to assess the economic feasibility of estimated Soviet military programs. It was the long history of experience in this field which permitted the Agency to contribute the "costing" aspect of the work of the CIA-DIA Joint Analysis Group mentioned in your letter. Furthermore, another Estimate (NIE 11-5-63), recently completed, examines the problems facing the Soviet economy including the broader aspects of military and space programs.

Sincerely,

  
John A. McCone

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Honorable Robert S. McNamara  
Secretary of Defense  
Washington 25, D. C.

APPROVED BY THE DD/I:

/s/  
RAY S. CLINE - 25 March 1963

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1. The project must include the period 1945-1965. The historical period is necessary to our own use as well as to fully account for the views of where the Soviet ground forces stand at present in both organization and material.

2. Dr. Stockfisch again raised the possibility of delaying the exercise in which CIA is presently engaged in response to the testimony concerning to the JCS. I told him that I agreed that it should be delayed. Dr. Stockfisch then offered to write a memorandum to the Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff relieving General Venable of his 15 May deadline and suggesting that no one whatever had been done as an input to the longer range project. He drafted the memorandum during the afternoon so that we could make our comments before he sent it out. He also scanned various CIA publications and other documents pertinent to the ground force problem.

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CIA, Military-Economic Division, SEC

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